

# Saved from Myself

Category: Feeling Anxious

written by Joan Greland-Goldstein | August 6, 2018

My obsession started with Anna Mayfield, one of my labor patients. She had a normal labor, but the baby's heart rate dropped precipitously in the delivery room.

When the baby was handed off to me, he was dusky, not crying and limp as a piece of cooked spaghetti. I pressed an oxygen mask over his nose and mouth, suctioned mucus from his stomach, rubbed his back, flicked the soles of his feet. He remained unresponsive.

A baby's status is assessed with a numerical score at one minute and five minutes after birth. Ten is perfect. Less than six is cause for concern. This baby's score was two.

Sweat trickled down the small of my back. My breathing came in ragged gasps.

At five minutes, my rubbing and suctioning still had no effect.

As I turned to the obstetrician for help, the baby took a big gasp and let out a hefty cry. All his signs perked up, so by six minutes he had a score of eight. I let Anna and her husband hold the baby briefly, then whisked him to the nursery.

After I took Anna to her postpartum room, I heard nothing more about them. But, my fertile mind conjured up the worst possible scenario. *The baby is brain damaged from lack of oxygen. His parents will sue me for negligence. I'll lose my job and my nursing license.*

I obsessed about this day and night, had a continual feeling of dread in the pit of my stomach, had trouble sleeping, lost my appetite and couldn't concentrate.

A month after Anna's delivery, I took another patient to postpartum and glanced at the list of patients on the unit. Anna Mayfield was back in for a postpartum issue.

I rushed to her room, filled with dread and anxiety.

"Hi, Anna. Do you remember me? I was your labor and delivery nurse."

"Of course! Thanks for all your help."

"How's the baby?"

"He's wonderful! Already smiling and cooing at us. And nursing like there's no tomorrow."

I let out the breath I was holding.

“It sounds like he’s doing well even though he was slow to breathe at first.”

“That was nothing. The pediatrician says he’s perfect.”

I floated out of her room on a cloud of relief, feeling close to tears. All my fears and obsessions were unfounded. I was saved from myself!

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